

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CCO-00 NSCE-00 DODE-00 CIAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 0299

S E C R E T TEL AVIV 8673

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS EG IS
SUBJ: EGYPTIAN THIRD ARMY

REF: A. CAIRO 3245, 3248, 3249
B. DAO TEL AVIV 1992 DTG 270106Z OCT 73
C. GENEVA 5682

1. AS I SEE IT, FATE OF THIRD ARMY APPEARS CENTRAL TO
OUR HOPES OF CREATION OF STABLE CEASEFIRE IN SOUTH
WHICH IN TURN SY MS BASIC TO AVOIDING FURTHER SERIOUS
STRAINS ON US-SOVIET RELATIONS, WHICH, WITH RELEVANT
SECURITY COUNCIL INPUTS, IT BASIS FOR ANY HOPES FOR
MOVING PARTIES TO PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.

2. ISRAELIS DO NOT HIDE FACT THAT FINAL LIND IN SIEGE
CHAIN AROUND THIRD ARMY WAS FORGED BETWEEN FIRST
AND SECOND CEASEFIRES (FITTING FINAL SUPPLY ROAD ON
WEST BANK AND ISOLATING SUEZ CITY). THEY MAINTAIN,
OF COURSE, THAT EGYPTIANS WERE (AND ARE) RESPONSIBLE
FOR TAKING INITIATIVE FOR FIRST (AND OTHER) VIOLATIONS OF
CEASEFIRES(S) AND IDF REACTED IN TIMELY MANNER TO TAKE
PRIME OBJECTIVES. SINCE PURPOSE OF THIS MESSAGE IS
NOT TO TRY TO DETERMINE WHO SHOT FIRST, I WILL LEAVE
THIS PARTICULAR SUBJECT, AS IT NOT GERMANE TO MAIN
THRUST OF THIS MESSAGE.

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3. THERE IS UNDOUBTEDLY CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE ON GOI
FROM MILITARY COMANDERS IN SOUTHERN SUEZ FRONT TO
GIVE AUTHORITY TO IDF TO FORCE SURRENDER TO THIRD
ARMY ELEMENTS TRAPPED

ON EAST BANK, ESTIMATED AT UP TO 30-35,000 MEN. PREFERRED OPTION OF IDF, AS DEP PRIME MIN ALLON INTIMATED TO ME ON OCT 24, HAD BEEN TO "FINISH OFF" ALL EGYPTIAN ARMY ON SUEZ FRONT, A MOVE WHICH HE RECOGNIZED WAS TEMPTING MILITARILY BUT UNWISE POLITICALLY FROM INTERNATIONAL POINT OF VIEW. THIS OPTION, HE NOTED, HAD BEEN EXPLICITLY REJECTED BY GOI WHEN IT ACCEPTED SC RES. 338. AND CEASEFIRE. IF, HOWEVER, EGYPTIAN SECOND ARMY INDEED JOINS FRAY TO EXTRICATE TRAPPED THIRD ARMY--AS IDF APPARENTLY BELIEVES IS LIKELIHOOD--THEN THE EGYPTIAN ARMED FORCES AND CEASEFIRE WILL GO UP IN SMOKE, WITH UNPREDICTABLE WIDER IMPLICATIONS.

4. WE DO NOT KNOW HERE IF GOI HAS ORDERED IDF QUIETLY TO SQUEEZE THIRD ARMY INTO SURRENDER (ALLON A FEW DAYS AGO SUGGESTED WITH TRAP SHU, POL AND WATER LINES CUT, EGYPTIANS COULD ONLY LAST UP TO WEEK WITHOUT GIVING UP.), OR IF ORDERS HAVE BEEN ISSUED TO ALLOW ENOUGH ESSENTIAL, HUMANITARIAN HELP THROUGH TO KEEP THIRD ARMY ALIVE, BUT HELPLESS. WIDELY PUBLICIZED (BY GOI) DISPATCH OF 200 UNITS OF PLASMA FROM ISRAEL TO THIRD ARMY THROUGH RED CROSS CHANNELS, AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE DAYAN'S

RECENT REMARKS (TEL AVIV 8654) AS POLITICAL RESTRAINTS ON IDF MILITARY GOALS OF "DESTRUCTION OF ARAB ARMIES AND THEIR WEAPONS," ARE SUGGESTIONS THAT GOI IS AT LEAST CONSIDERING NOT FORCING SURRENDER OF THIRD ARMY, IF INDEED DECISION TO THAT EFFECT NOT ALREADY TAKEN.

5. AS I SEE IT, PERSONNEL OF THIRD ARMY, WHETHER ACTUALLY CAPTURED OR TRAPPED, ARE MOST IMPORTANT CHIPS FOR GOI IN ATTEMPT FORCE EGYPTIANS TO AGREE TO RAPID EXCHANGE OF POWS, A MOST SIGNIFICANT DOMESTIC POLITICAL ISSUE HERE. I GATHER EGYPTIANS ARE STILL DRAGGING THEIR FEET, PROBABLY ON ASSUMPTION ISRAELI POWS WILL FETCH QUITE A PRICE IN CONCESSIONS FROM THE GOI.

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6. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, I RECOMMEND WE MOVE FAST ON A NUMBER OF FRONTS, IF WE HAVE NOT ALREADY DONE SO, TO AVOID WHAT APPEARS TO BE WORST CASE SHORT TERM MILITARY POSSIBILITY IN SOUTH--ENGAGEMENT OF IDF AND EGYPTIAN ARMIES ALL ALONG SUEZ FRONT:

A. GET SOVIETS TO INDUCE EGYPTIANS TO AGREE TO EARLY EXCHANGE OF POWS. (THIS IS CRUCIAL.)

B. GET GOI TO AGREE NOT TO FORCE SURRENDER OF THIRD ARMY.

C. GET SOVIET AND EGYPTIANS TO FORCE COMMANDERS OF THIRD AND SECOND ARMIES TO STOP SHOOTING, OR NOT TO

START SHOOTING. REASSURANCE THAT GOI NOT TRYING TO OBTAIN
SURRENDER OF THIRD ARMY IS KEY TO SUCCESS HERE.

7. SINCE THINGS APPEAR TO HAVE THEIR OWN MOMENTUM OUT
HERE WITH SUCH POTENTIALLY DIRE CONSEQUENCES, IT IS OBVIOUS
ALL OF THE ABOVE SHOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED IN MATTER OF HOURS,
NOT DAYS. I WOULD APPRECIATE QUICK RESPONSE TO ABOVE.
IF I'M WRONG OR IF THINGS ARE ALREADY IN HAND, I WOULD APPRECIATE
KNOWING. IF I'M RIGHT AND THINGS ARE NOT IN HAND AND WE
NEED TO MOVE FAST, PLEASE LET ME KNOW WHAT I CAN DO. IN THIS
RESPECT, I HAVE APPOINTMENT AT 1700 LOCAL (1500Z) WITH
FONMIN EBAN.
KEATING

SECRET

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